

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received **JUN 23 1983**

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**historic Rowan County Courthouse

and/or common

**2. Location**street & number Main Street<sup>2</sup> not for publicationcity, town Morehead vicinity ofstate Kentucky code county Rowan code**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> na in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> na being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**name Rowan County Fiscal Courtstreet & number Main Streetcity, town Morehead vicinity of state Kentucky**5. Location of Legal Description**courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rowan County Courthousestreet & number Main Streetcity, town Morehead state Kentucky**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**title Survey of Historic Sites in KY has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate 1983 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ localdepository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Councilcity, town Frankfort state Kentucky

## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent

☒ good

☐ fair

☐ deteriorated

☐ ruins

☐ unexposed

### Check one

☒ unaltered

☐ altered

### Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Rowan County Courthouse is located in the center of the commercial district of the small northeastern town of Morehead (1980 pop. 7,789). The building is situated on a small square bounded by streets on all sides. Set back from the street with an expanse of land in front and to the sides, the courthouse is the prominent site of the commercial district.

Constructed in 1899, the courthouse is a substantial two-story building of brick construction resting on a rusticated limestone foundation. The asymmetrical facade faces Main Street, and the main entrance is enhanced by a semi-circular limestone arch. Above the main entrance is a triple window placement of two-over-two pane with rough-faced limestone lintels and sills. Complementing the asymmetrical placement of bays, the south corner of the facade is accented by rusticated limestone quoins.

Brickwork is executed in common bond with a row of headers every seven rows. Windows are two-over-two pane with rough-faced limestone lintels and sills. Each gable end has triple-window placement.

The arrangement of rooms and chamber of the courthouse follows a functional order. A wide central hall accentuated with wainscoting bisects the building with stairways at each end. Doors on the first floor have two-pane transoms. Ornate stairways lead to the courtroom on the second floor. The large courtroom and judge's chambers occupy the second floor. The courtroom is in an excellent state of preservation retaining the original jury and spectator seats. Presently, the Rowan County Courthouse is in a good state of repair.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1899 Builder/Architect —

### Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Rowan County Courthouse is one of the more architecturally significant buildings in Morehead. Situated on a small square bounded by streets on all sides, the courthouse is the most substantial building in the commercial district.

Rowan County was created in 1856 as the one-hundred and forth county from parts of Fleming and Morgan Counties by an act of the Kentucky Legislature. The county was named in honor of John Rowan, a distinguished jurist and statesman of Kentucky. Morehead, named in honor of Governor James T. Morehead, was established as the county seat under provisions of the legislative act which created the county in 1856. The town was laid out the same year, but was not incorporated until 1869.

The present courthouse was constructed in 1899 at a cost of several thousand dollars, and replaced a smaller two-story frame structure.

The courthouse is certainly one of the most outstanding buildings architecturally in Morehead and the county. The brick and stone masonry are well executed and the massing of the building is clearly composed. A rational floorplan allows for an easy flow of traffic. The nature of the structure is straightforward and is successful in its function.

In the Spring of 1981, the courthouse was vacated following the completion of a new courthouse. Following the closing of the old courthouse, the Rowan County Judge/Executive appointed ten members to the Old Courthouse Committee to make recommendations on the future of the courthouse. In October, 1982, a public meeting was held to solicit comments on the courthouse, which resulted in tremendous public support for the preservation of the structure.

As a result of public support for the preservation of the old courthouse, the Rowan County Fiscal Court in December 1982, officially sanctioned the efforts undertaken by citizens in the county to preserve and restore the local landmark. On January 27, 1983, the Rowan County Courthouse Preservation Committee, Incorporated, was officially incorporated for the express purpose of preserving and restoring the courthouse, and to raise funds to accomplish this goal.

The Rowan County Courthouse Preservation Committee supported by several thousand citizens who signed petitions to preserve the structure would like to use the old courthouse as an Appalachian Cultural Center. The center would house a regional museum, craft shops, archival collections and tourist information center. Morehead is the gateway to the Eastern Appalachian Area of Kentucky and the project is certainly a worthwhile endeavor.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Clark, Thomas D., A History of Kentucky. Lexington, Ky.: The John Bradford Press, 1960.  
Collins, Lewis, A History of Kentucky, Vol. II, Maysville, Ky.: by the author, 1874.  
Johnson, E. Polk, A History of Kentucky & Kentuckians, Vol. II. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1 Acre

Quadrangle name Morehead

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 17 286880 4228860  
Zone Easting Northing

B                    
Zone Easting Northing

C                  

D                  

E                  

F                  

G                  

H                  

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at the intersection of Main Street and Norma Avenue proceed 200 feet in a southwestward direction to the corner of Main and Court Streets; thence 200 feet in a northwestward direction; thence 200 feet in a northeastward direction; thence 200 feet in a southeastern direction to the point of origin.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title William Gus Johnson, Senior Historian

organization Kentucky Heritage Council date June, 1983

street & number 9th Fl., Capital Plaza Tower telephone 564-7005

city or town Frankfort state Kentucky

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Mary Curran Appel

title State Historic Preservation Officer date June 15, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 7/21/83

for Melona Byrne  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation sheet Rowan County Courthouse  
Morehead, Kentucky

Item number

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Johnson, L. F., Famous Kentucky Tragedies and Trials. Louisville: The Baldwin Law Book Company, 1916.

Kentucky Economic Statistics. Frankfort: Kentucky Commerce Cabinet, 1982.

Lipscomb, Alexander B., The Commercial History of the Southern States. Louisville: John P. Morton and Company, 1903.

# KENTUCKY COUNTIES

Appalachian Area Shaded.

